

MARINES SAVED ROUNDS



Deploying Marines, Others at Risk May Receive Flu Vaccine

By Ellen Maurer,
BUREAU OF MEDICINE & SURGERY, Washington

Deploying Marines and sailors, as well as patients who are at highest risk for getting sick this season have priority for flu vaccinations.

The Navy's annual immunization season, which has been affected but not halted by worldwide shortages of the flu vaccine, started on time when Navy health care providers began administering

flu vaccinations in late October.

Supplies for all the services are less than expected – about 1.5 million fewer doses than projected, according to Department of Defense officials.

However, those who most need the vaccine will get it, said Navy Capt. Edward M. Kilbane, an infectious disease expert at the Bureau

of Medicine and Surgery in Washington.

"We anticipate that all of our high-risk beneficiaries and all of our operationally employed service members will be vaccinated on time this flu season," said Kilbane. "This includes individuals in critical operational duty positions here in the (United States). The major impact on DoD will be – as it will be for the rest of the United States – on our otherwise healthy, non-deployed population."

The DoD's priority groups for this year's flu vaccine include operational military personnel, recruit/trainee populations and their instructors, beneficiaries with high-risk medical conditions and health care workers with direct patient contact.

Due to this year's shortened supply, some service members will be deferred from getting the vaccine, which in previous years was mandatory for all active duty

and reserve service members. Those who are deferred from taking the vaccine will still be considered medically fit for full duty.

"We want to ensure our supplies go to those who most need it," said Kilbane. "For those who do not get a flu shot this year, I strongly suggest they use other preventive health measures, like staying away from other people who are sick, washing your hands frequently and staying home from work if you do get sick."

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness that can range from mild to severe symptoms that may, in severe cases, result in death, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. About 5 to 20 percent of Americans get the flu each year. The most serious cases involve those who have weakened immune systems, older people and the very young. **M**

Housing Costs Reduced Thanks to Increase in 2005 BAH Funds

The Department of Defense released the 2005 Basic Allowance for Housing rates Dec. 14, continuing its initiative to reduce service members' out-of-pocket housing costs.

The total increase for fiscal year 2005 housing allowance funds will be about \$2.5 billion more than FY 2004. The 2005 rates represent the final phase of the planned buy down in out-of-pocket housing expenses. Other components of the increase are geographic rate protection and housing cost inflation.

The average out-of-pocket

expense – the portion of housing cost for which service members are responsible – has been reduced from 3.5 percent last year to zero this year. Service members' actual expense may be higher or lower than the average, based on their actual choice of housing.

Three components are included in the BAH computation:

- Median current market rent
- Average utilities (electricity, heat, and water/sewer)
- Average renter's insurance

Total housing costs are calculated for six housing profiles, based on dwelling type and number of bedrooms, in

each military housing area. BAH rates are then calculated for each pay grade, both with and without dependents. An estimated \$12.3 billion will be paid to more than 910,000 service members in 2005.

Data is collected annually for approximately 400 military housing areas in the United States, including Alaska and Hawaii. Local commands help determine from what neighborhoods data is collected and direct the data collection effort toward adequate apartment complexes and individual housing units.

For members with dependents, the average increase in

the BAH is about 8 percent. A typical corporal with dependents, for example, will receive about \$47 per month more than last year. A gunnery sergeant with dependents will have about \$60 more in his paycheck.

An integral part of the BAH program is the provision of individual rate protection to all service members. No matter what happens to measured housing costs, an individual in a given location will never see his BAH rate decrease.

For more about 2005 BAH rates, visit <https://secureapp2.hqda.pentagon.mil/perdiem/bah.html>. **M**

Postal Service Helps Families Send Love to Deployed Service Members

By Cpl. Micah Snead, MARINE CORPS AIR STATION BEAUFORT, S.C.

Family members now have one less excuse to delay sending care packages to their deployed Marines. The U.S. Postal Service is offering free packing materials for military spouses or dependents trying to send care packages to their deployed service members.

"It's a small way to help but it can go a long way," said Susan Harris, customer service representative, U.S. Postal Service.

Family members can receive up to 25 Priority Mail boxes, mailing labels, customs forms and a roll of box tape. The boxes are available in medium or large sizes. From there, the only restrictions are how much love can fit into a box, Harris said.

The weight limit for Priority

Mail is 70 pounds. "You can get a lot of things into these boxes but, care packages don't have to be big to be important," Harris said.

Items mailed to an Army/Air Force Post Office or Fleet Post Office address must have a customs form listing everything in the package. The Postal Service also requires hand delivery of packages being sent to APO/FPO addresses.

Once mail arrives at an East or West Coast APO/FPO facility, the military takes over delivery.

Letters are given top priority. Packages sent through Priority Mail are next down the line. Once mail arrives "in country" it is all treated the same regardless of class. Packages normally take 20 to

30 days to arrive in deployed areas. Priority Mail is always assured of being flown to its location while packages sent through other parcel services may be shipped to their destination.

"As a general rule, Priority Mail is the best all-around option," Harris said. "There is no guarantee that the package will get there sooner, but there is a high-likelihood of it."

To receive the free packing materials, call (800) 610-8734, press "1" for English or "2" for Spanish, then "3" to speak to an operator. **M**



You've Got Mail

MotoMail Program Puts Families in Touch with Their Deployed Marines

MARINE CORPS BASE QUANTICO, Va.

A new Web site helps families and friends send free messages to their Marines deployed to Iraq by going to USMC's Motivational Mail at www.motomail.us.

"The (MotoMail Printer, Folder, Sealer) system is based on the British Armed Forces system called E-Bluey that has been used to send free messages to personnel stationed at locations around the world for the last five years," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Don McCarty, Headquarters Marine Corps, Postal Affairs Officer.

MotoMail ensures privacy and messages are usually

delivered in 24 hours or less.

To use MotoMail, go to the Web site and create a user account. Once an account is created, the rest of the process is like writing an e-mail. Several pull down menus help locate unit addresses, then the Marine's rank and full name must be entered.

Messages must have a Marine's name in the address to be processed, said McCarty. Messages with fake names will not be delivered.

Once the letter is complet-



ed, click submit and the message is sent on its way to the Marine post office in Iraq, where it is downloaded, automatically printed, folded, sealed and then dropped in with the rest of a unit's mail. The Web site displays past messages sent by an account so that users can check the delivery status of their messages.

MotoMail is not designed for the general public to send letters of encouragement or support. This process is also not intended to replace U.S. mail, as attachments, enclosures, or packages cannot be sent.

For more information, please contact McCarty at (703) 784-9537 or e-mail at don.mccarty@usmc.mil. **M**